

HIV/AIDS Among Adolescents and Young Adults in Georgia

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At least half of all new HIV infections in the United States are individuals less than 25 years of age¹.

Certain groups of people; such as young women, young men who have sex with men (MSM), minority youth, and youth in high-risk environments; are especially at risk for HIV². Sexual contact remains the most common mode of HIV exposure in young people¹.

The most common modes of exposure for U.S. males 13-24 years old reported with AIDS in 2000 were MSM (49%), injection drug use (IDU) (10%), and heterosexual contact (9%)³.

In 2000, sixty-one percent of the HIV cases reported among persons 13-19 years of age in the United States were 13 to 19 year old females, while females between the ages of 13 to 24 represented 47% of the HIV cases reported in this age group in the 34 areas with confidential HIV reporting³.

African-Americans aged 13-24 represented 56% of the cumulative HIV cases reported among people aged 13-24 in the 34 areas with confidential HIV reporting³. As a comparison, HIV infection was the leading cause of death among African-American men 25-44 and third among African-American women in the same age group in 1999 in the United States³. A significant number of these adults who died of AIDS were more than likely infected in their teens and twenties.

Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) increase the risk of HIV infection because of increased susceptibility and contagiousness. People under 25 years of age represent two-thirds of the estimated 12 million cases of STDs, excluding HIV, reported each year in the United States². According to the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, there was a decrease in sexual intercourse and an increase in condom use among high school students who were sexually active from 1991 to 1999 in the United States². However, unprotected sexual activity remains exceedingly high among young people and high-risk sexual behaviors are more common among students attending alternative high schools than youth attending regular high schools. Additionally, college students and minority youth were reported to have higher rates of unprotected sex. The use of alcohol and drugs can further impair judgment and lead to risky sexual behaviors.

What is HIV/AIDS?

The human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is the virus that causes acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS)⁴. AIDS was first identified in the United States in 1981 and is an epidemic around the world⁵. AIDS develops when the immune system of an HIV-infected person gradually deteriorates leading to severe debilitating conditions⁵. HIV decreases the immune system's ability to fight against microorganisms.

How is HIV transmitted?

HIV is transmitted most commonly through unprotected sexual contact with a person with HIV⁶. Injection drug users can contract HIV by sharing needles, syringes, or drug paraphernalia contaminated with HIV-infected blood. If a pregnant woman with HIV is not treated with medication, there is a 25% to 33% chance that she will transmit the virus to her baby during pregnancy, after giving birth or through breastfeeding⁶. Treating the mother with multiple drugs greatly reduces the risk of HIV transmission to the baby and delivery by cesarean section may reduce the risk further.

Is there a cure for HIV infection?

There is no cure for HIV infection⁷. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved drugs that reduce the amount of the virus in body fluids. These medications slow the progression of the virus into AIDS.

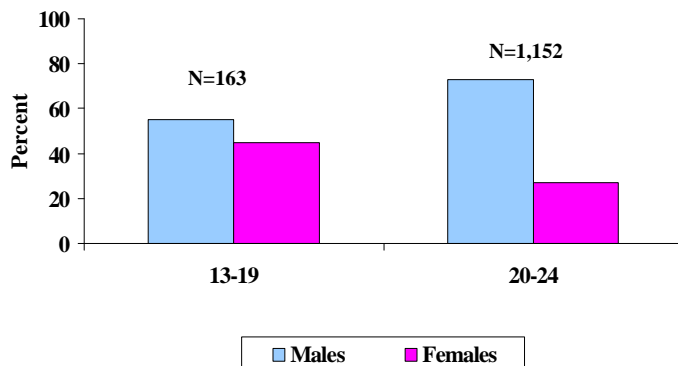
It's a Fact

- Of the 26,574 AIDS cases that have been reported in Georgia through June 2003, 1,315 have been among persons 13-24 years of age⁸.
- Of the 1,315 AIDS cases reported in persons between the ages of 13-24 in Georgia, **12%** were among people 13-19 years of age and **88%** were among people aged 20-24⁸.
- From 1996 to 2000, AIDS was the leading cause of death for African-Americans aged 25-44 in Georgia⁹.
- Nationally, African-American males 13-24 years of age comprised **38%** of AIDS cases for their age group among males, while African-American females accounted for **60%** of AIDS cases among females in the same age group as of December 2001¹⁰.
- As of December 2000, females 13-19 years of age were **54%** of new AIDS cases in this age group in the United States. Among teenagers aged 13-19, African-Americans were **64%** and Hispanics/Latinos were **20%** of new AIDS cases in this age group in the United States¹¹.
- Through December 2001 in the United States, African-American females aged 13-19 represented **72%** of all persons diagnosed with HIV among young females 13-19 years of age¹⁰.
- As of December 2001, African-American adults aged 20-24 accounted for **53%** of all persons diagnosed with HIV, whites were **35%**, and Hispanics/Latinos were **10%** of HIV cases in this age group in the United States¹⁰.

The risk of HIV infection is greatly reduced if high-risk behaviors such as having unprotected sex and using contaminated needles are avoided. Tattooing, body piercing, and injecting steroids can be risks for HIV infection if needles are not properly sterilized.

For more information on HIV/AIDS statistics, contact the Georgia Office of Minority Health's HIV/AIDS TAKE Project at (404) 463-8957 or visit www.communityhealth.state.ga.us

Figure 1
AIDS Cases by Gender
Among Adolescents 13-19 Years of Age and Young Adults 20-24 Years of Age
Georgia, as of June 2003

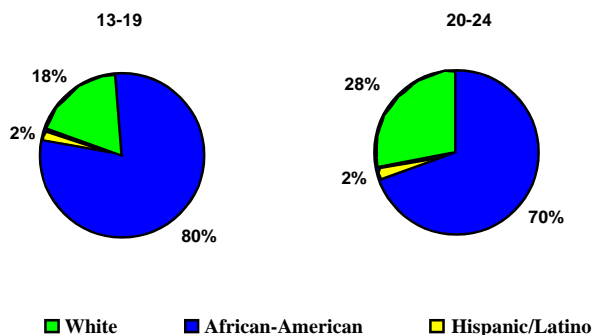


Males represented **55%** of the total number of AIDS cases reported in Georgia for adolescents 13-19 years of age⁸. Males were **73%** of the cumulative cases in adults aged 20-24 in Georgia. (Figure 1)

African-Americans were **80%** of AIDS cases reported among adolescents 13-19 years of age and **70%** of cases among adults 20-24 years of age⁸. (Figure 2)

Heterosexual contact (**29%**) and men who have sex with men (**28%**) were the most common modes of exposure in Georgia for adolescents aged 13-19 reported with AIDS⁸. MSM was the most common mode of exposure among adults aged 20-24 with AIDS, accounting for **49%**. (Figure 3)

Figure 2
AIDS Cases by Race/Ethnicity
Among Adolescents 13-19 Years of Age and Young Adults 20-24 Years of Age
Georgia, as of June 2003



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Figure 3
AIDS Cases by Exposure Category
Among Adolescents 13-19 Years of Age and Young Adults 20-24 Years of Age
Georgia, as of June 2003

Exposure Category	13-19	20-24	Total
Men who have sex with men (MSM)	46(28%)	569(49%)	615(47%)
Injecting Drug Use (IDU)	9(6%)	101(9%)	110(8%)
MSM & IDU	3(2%)	47(4%)	50(4%)
Hemophilia/coagulation disorder	14(9%)	20(2%)	34(3%)
Heterosexual contact	48(29%)	222(19%)	270(21%)
Receipt of blood, components, or tissue	5(3%)	14(1%)	19(1%)
Risk not reported/Other	38(23%)	179(16%)	217(17%)
Total	163(100%)	1,152(100%)	1,315(100%)